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SUBJECT: NPA - TRENDS IN RECENT ATTACKS

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- B. Manila 2973
- C. Manila 2777

¶1. (U) Summary: The Communist Party of the Philippines-Military Commission (CPP-MC) has directed the New People's Army (NPA) to concentrate on new offensives against the "key loyalist and fascist officials of the Arroyo regime." The number of NPA attacks nationwide appears to have increased since April 2006, primarily consisting of encounters and ambushes upon troops of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), but also including assassinations of some local government officials. The NPA continues to utilize landmine attacks targeting AFP troops, but on occasion also wounding civilians. The National Democratic Front (NDF) has apologized for injuries to these civilian victims, and offered to pay for their hospitalization costs. NDF officials, nonetheless, insisted that the NPA will continue to use landmines, as its "legitimate right." The NPA also continues to attack telecommunication stations and police stations. End Summary.

NPA on the offensive

¶2. (U) In August 2006, a new directive by the Communist Party of the Philippines-Military Commission (CPP-MC) entitled "Major points in the tit for tat struggle against the US-directed war of terror" appeared on the CPP/NPA website, instructing NPA units to prepare for additional tactical offensives in both rural and urban areas on "the most bloodthirsty loyalists of the Arroyo regime among the corrupt bureaucrats and military and police officers" as well as on "key loyalist and fascist officials of the Arroyo regime." It specified use of sniping techniques, attack-and-retreat units, RPGs, mortars, and landmines in order to "inflict casualties, hamper enemy movement and demoralize the enemy forces."

¶3. (U) Since April 2006, incidents involving the NPA do appear to have increased. National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales told the media on August 9 that military estimates indicated at least 1,130 "liquidations" from 2000 to May 2006, including 843 civilians. He cited the Bicol region as the most dangerous, but killings and ambushes have taken place in virtually all provinces nationwide. He also claimed that the NPA had separately killed 384 soldiers, policemen, and intelligence agents in ambushes or assassinations. On August 8, an estimated 20 NPA troops even wounded five AFP soldiers from the 901st Infantry Brigade in Albay province while the troops were packing relief supplies for evacuees from the Mayon Volcano area. Elsewhere on August 8, the AFP killed two NPA soldiers (while losing one AFP soldier), while separately killing three NPA soldiers allegedly extorting money from miners.

¶4. (U) Typically, NPA units consist of no more than 15-30 soldiers, but on some occasions can be as large as 50-60. The NPA sometimes relies on "special armed partisan units" to carry out "special

tactical operations," according to Gonzales. When AFP units encounter NPA troops, there are often long but inconclusive firefights, frequently with few or even no casualties. Some observers attribute this to the poor marksmanship training of the AFP, a shortfall the AFP is now addressing through the Battalions of Excellence program of the Philippine Defense Reform initiative.

Toll on non-combatants

15. (U) The NPA increasingly seems to resort to the use of landmines against AFP vehicles and convoys; sometimes these result in apparently unintended civilian fatalities and/or casualties. On July 24, NPA troops detonated two landmines along the national highway in Unidos Village in Surigao del Sur Province, seriously wounding five jeepney passengers and 10 pedestrians. NDF officials claimed that the NPA had mistakenly identified the jeepney as a military vehicle, and offered to pay for the hospital expenses of the wounded. According to NDF spokesperson Jorge Madlos, while the injuries to civilians were unfortunate, the NPA "will not give up using landmines," the use of which is the NPA's "legitimate right." Madlos admitted that this specific attack was an operational "mistake" and claimed that this NPA bomb unit will undergo retraining.

16. (U) Separately, an estimated 100 NPA troops in Agusan del Sur took hostage about 50 civilians as a State of the Nation Address (SONA) "gift" to President Arroyo. Officials of the Philippine National Police (PNP) speculated that this abduction was an attempt to lure PNP and AFP troops into an ambush, and so did not attempt to rescue them. Three hours later, the NPA released all the hostages unharmed.

MANILA 00003356 002 OF 002

Other raids

17. (U) Also on July 24, eight suspected NPA elements burned down a Globe telecommunications Tower in Camarines Sur Province. According to police officials, the NPA ransacked and destroyed equipment prior to setting the control tower on fire and retreating to the Tangco Vaca mountain. Since January, at least 10 Globe towers have been attacked in different parts of the country. Many observers have noted that the NPA targets Globe because it refuses to pay protection money or "revolutionary taxes," unlike some of its competitors.

18. (U) The NPA also continues to attack and steal weapons from local police stations, small AFP detachments, paramilitary units, and private security companies. On July 21, approximately 30 NPA troops attacked a police substation in Isabela Province, stealing two M-16 and two M-14 rifles, and an unspecified number of radio communication sets.
JONES